

Guru Gobind Singh: His teachings, our learnings



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Guru Gobind Singh, born Gobind Rai on 5 January 1666, was the tenth Sikh Guru, a spiritual master, warrior, poet and philosopher. His father Guru TegBahadur, was known as the "protector of Hindus", and was beheaded for refusing to convert to Islam. Gobind Singh was formally installed as the leader of the Sikhs at age nine, becoming the tenth Sikh Guru.

It is said that a splendid Divine Light shone in the darkness of the night of his birth. Pir Bhikan Shah a Muslim mystic performed his prayers in that Easterly direction (instead of towards the West, contrary to his daily practice), and guided by this Divine Light, he travelled with a group of his followers until he reached Patna Sahib in Bihar.

It was here that Gobind Rai was born to Mata Gujri in 1666. It is said that 'Pir Bhikan Shah approached the child and offered two bowls of milk and water, signifying both the great religions of Hinduism and Islam. The child smiled and placed his hands on both bowls.



Guru Gobind Singh
By Sobha Singh

Gobind Rai was born with a holy mission of which he tells us in his autobiography "*Bachittar Natak*". In it Guru Gobind Singh tells us how and for what purpose he was sent into this world by God. He states that before he came into this world, as a free spirit he was engaged in meditation in the seven peaked Hemkunt Mountain (where gurudwara Hemkunt Sahib is located now):

"ab main apnikathabakhano; tap sad-hat jehbidhmoheano. Hemkuntparbathaijahan, sapatsringsobhathaitaha, sapatsringtahnamkahavapand raj jah jog kamava. tah ham adhiktapasyasadhi" (Now I relate my own story as to how I was brought here, while I was absorbed in deep meditation. The site was the mountain named Hemkunt, with seven peaks. That mountain is called SaptShring (seven-peaked mountain), where the Pandavas practised Yoga. There I was absorbed in deep meditation on the Primal Power, the Supreme).

Guru Gobind Singh explains why he emerged from the Supreme Reality in human form to carry out his Creator's command: *"For this purpose was I born, let all virtuous people understand. I was born to advance righteousness, to emancipate the good, and to destroy all evil-doers root and branch."*

Bachittar Natak, literally Resplendent Drama is from Dasam Granth, ang (page) 94 to ang 175 of the 2326 ang. It is generally attributed to the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh.

It starts with a praise of the God "Akal Purukh". It then gives a genealogy starting from King Surya, King Raghu, King Aja, King Dasrath to Lord Rama and his two sons Lav and Kush. It gives the author's own biography and includes the Battle of Nadaun, Husaini battle and the arrival of prince Muazzam in the Punjab. It continues up to AD 1696.

It is written in early Braj bhasha with some Apabhramsha influence. Several translations in Punjabi, Hindi and English exists.

The life story of Guru Gobind Singh is further told by the court-poet Sainapat/ Senapat. He finished his Sri Gur Sobha in AD 1711, three years after the death of the Guru. Other early sources are Koer Singh's Gurbilas Patshahi, written in 1751 and the Bansawalinamah by Kesar Singh Chhibbar (1767).

There is some controversy regarding the authorship (whether this was really written by Guru Gobind Singh) since some of the content and style does not match his hard line conservative views of some Sikh scholars.

A scripture of Sikhism, Dasam Granth contains texts attributed to the tenth and the last Sikh guru, Gobind Singh. They were compiled after the guru's death in 1708 by Mani Singh, one of his disciples. He took nine years to gather the guru's writings from various followers.

But there were different versions. From 1892 to 1897, Sikh scholars studied as many as 32 adaptations and prepared the Dasam Granth now under fire among some Sikhs. Most religious scriptures are second-hand and passed down over centuries, and controversies about authenticity, authorship or importance are common. It's not clear how many pages or verses of the scripture are considered controversial. In September 2000, after a scholar, Virsa Singh, said his research indicated that Dasam Granth in its entirety was the tenth guru's work, the high priests issued an edict banning all debate on its authenticity. However, it's over 20 years and the debate continues. Many maintain the Dasam Granth is inconsistent with Gobind Singh's other teachings and could not have been written by him.

Guru Gobind Singh's tumultuous life remained full of difficulties, he devoted peaceful moments to compile literature and more importantly, the Guru Granth Sahib, which is the holy scripture of the Sikhs. It contains hymns of both Hindu and Muslim saints.

Among his notable contributions to Sikhism are founding the 'Sikh warrior' community called *Khalsa* (pure ones or the 'khalas' man; *Khalisah/ Khalis* or crown-lands in Persian) in 1699 and introducing *the Five Ks*, the five articles of faith that *Khalsa* Sikhs wear at all times. Guru Gobind Singh also continued the formalisation of the religion, wrote important Sikh texts, and enshrined the scripture the Guru Granth Sahib as Sikhism's eternal Guru.

He is variously revered as *Sarbans Dani* (the merciful donor, who sacrificed his all), *Mard Agamra* (man without any parallels), *Shah-e-Shahenshah* (emperor of emperors), *Bar do Alam Shah* (ruler of both worlds), amongst others.

Gobind Singh was the only son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh guru, and Mata Gujri. He was born in Patna, Bihar while his father was visiting Bengal and Assam. His birth name was Gobind Rai, and a shrine named Takht Sri Patna Harmandir Sahib marks the site of the house where he was born and spent the first four years of his life. In 1670, his family returned to Punjab, and in March 1672 they moved to Chakk Nanaki (now Anandpur) in the Himalayan foothills of north India, the Sivalik range, where he was schooled.

His father Guru Tegh Bahadur was petitioned by Kashmiri Pandits led by Pandit Kirpa Chand, (who later became a Sikh as Kirpa Singh), along with Brahmins of Haridwar and Benares, in 1675 for protection from the fanatic persecution by Iftikar Khan, an Islamic satrap of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Tegh Bahadur considered a peaceful resolution by meeting Aurangzeb, but was cautioned by his advisors that his life may be at risk.

Quoting Group Captain Tejwant Singh (blog: 'Don't mistake me for a Muslim'): "*Unfortunately they (Brahmins) never ever made any effort to stop forcible conversions and demolition of temples by Muslims -ever since Islam came to India. Instead, in total antipathy, they jealously guarded the areas under their own Matthas (Monasteries). They lived in a selfish manner and were not even on talking terms with each other. Had they been selfless with some foresight, they could have called upon the numerous Rajput rulers -whom they the Brahmins had elevated to the number two position in the Caste system as guardians of the society- to stand united against the onslaught of Islamic rulers. But the selfish Rajput rulers were themselves constantly at war with each other ...Why didn't the Brahmins of Hardwar and Banaras go to one of the nearest Shankaracharyas? ...And the countryside was pillage by unscrupulous marauders who took away not only the wealth of India but thousands of men, women and children as slaves to be sold-off as far away as Europe... And when many of the Indian slaves died crossing the snowy mountains between India and Afghanistan, the Islamic plunderers named them 'The Hindu Kush' meaning 'Hindu Killer'.*"

While some facts stated are correct, but it is a rather 'emotionally charged' account of what happened and why. There are other documented accounts of reasons why Guru Tegh

Bahadur was persecuted by Aurangzeb. These include the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i- Mualla* (The Royal Mughal Court News), *Ahkam-e-Alamgiri* by Mirza Inayatullah Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab* by Khafi Khan, *Shahid Bilas* by Sewa Singh, *Rehatnama* by Bhai Chaupa Singh and the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* by Sayyid Ghulam Husain in 1782, almost 107 years after the martyrdom. Sayyid Ghulam Husain was native of Lucknow and wrote that Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib and Hafiz Adam, a disciple of Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi had collected a large body of men. They moved about in countryside and seized money and material by force. It was feared they might revolt against the government. This has also been mentioned by J.D.Cunningham in his book 'The History of the Sikhs. However, Hafiz Adam was banished by Shah Jahan in 1642, thirty-three years earlier. Hafiz went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina where he died in 1643. (Inderjeet Singh)

The Sikh spiritual movement that had centered around Kartarpur Sahib (now in Pakistan) at the death of Guru Nanak had by then spread to far-flung regions of Punjab and beyond. His followers came from all backgrounds, bringing their material as well as human resources. They were collecting 'Rakhi' tax from the Nawab of Oudh. In June, 1781, Najaf Khan, the prime minister of the Mughal Empire, had confirmed the Sikh's right to Rakhi at 12.5 per cent of the standard land revenue in Haryana and the upper Ganga Doab.

Official Mughal records, describing the reasons for the assassination of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675, state that he moved around with several thousand followers. With the rise in the political and material influence of the institution of guruhood, the Sikh gurus were increasingly seen as political rivals by petty kingdoms of the Mughal Empire. Their influence and strength was also visible to the Mughal emperor, who was also, it is said upset with the Guru being called 'Sachha Patshah' (the true king). The days of political obscurity under Guru Nanak were long gone. The *Waqia Navis* or Intelligence Agency of the Mughal Emperor would constantly be reporting on the incredible popularity of Guru Tegh Bahadur. There are several accounts explaining the motive behind the assassination of Guru Tegh Bahadur on Aurangzeb's orders. One of them, the most commonly accepted by the Sikh tradition is of the petition by Kashmiri Pandits, which has been documented. However, there seems to have been a political motive too.

During the short tenure of Guru Har Krishan, his older brother, Ram Rai, who wanted the guruhood for himself, plotted incessantly against him, lobbying with a few prominent Sikh leaders and trying to convince the Sikh community that he was, in fact, the rightful spiritual descendant of Nanak's Sikhism. However, as per Guru Har Krishan's 'wish' Guru Tegh Bahadur was appointed. The other complaint against him that reached the ear of the emperor was made by Ram Rai. Like Guru Har Krishan before him, Guru Tegh Bahadur was accused of being a "pretender to power".

Muhammad Qasim in his *Ibratnama* (1719) refers to Guru Tegh Bahadur having come under the wrath of Aurangzeb to be condemned to death. He writes: "*the Emperor (Aurangzeb) had regard for royal power but he also associated with religious men. Some of the mystics aligned with him of their own accord. Others, like Sarmad, tasted martyrdom. Guru Tegh Bahadur was in the latter category. He was condemned not only for religious reasons but also because he lived in great splendour and his followers claimed sovereignty for him. In fact, a large number of people had begun to follow Guru Har Rai (who is wrongly mentioned as Guru Tegh Bahadur's father), and to glorify him.*"

Another Persian account is Bhimsen's *Nuskha-i Dilkusha* (1709): "*Some of his descendants (of Guru Nanak) have been masters of mystic attainments and have adopted the way of poverty and humility. Many took to the path of rebellion, such as Tegh Bahadur, by name, who lived in the mountains near Sirhind: he got himself called King (Padshah), and a large body of people gathered around him. When the news was conveyed to His Majesty Emperor*

Alamgir (Aurangzeb), it was ordered that he should be brought to the Court. When he came to the Court, he was executed."

The Sikh Encyclopaedia by Dr Harbans Singh mentions Khwaja Abdulla, a native of Mani Majra (near Chandigarh) and the keeper of the jail at Chandni Chowk kotwali in Delhi, where Guru Tegh Bahadur was detained under the orders of Mughal Emperor. 'Khwaja was a pious man and respected Guru Ji. He tried to mitigate the rigour of Guru Ji's incarceration as far as his official position permitted. After Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, he resigned his post and went to live at Anandpur, where he served Guru Gobind Singh, as a physician. His son, Ghulam Abbas, served under Nawab Kapur Singh as a physician during *misl* times'.

According to Sikh history, the young Gobind Rai – to be known as Gobind Singh after 1699 – advised his father that no one was more worthy to lead and make a sacrifice than him. His father made the attempt, but was arrested then publicly beheaded in Delhi on 11 November 1675 under the orders of Aurangzeb for refusing to convert to Islam. After this martyrdom, the young Gobind Rai was installed by the Sikhs as the tenth Sikh Guru on Vaisakhi on 29 March 1676.

The education of Guru Gobind Singh continued after he became the 10th Guru, both in reading and writing as well as martial arts such as horse riding and archery. In 1684, he wrote the *Chandi di Var (Var Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki)* – a legendary war between the good and the evil, where the good stands up against injustice and tyranny, as described in the ancient Sanskrit text MarkandeyaPurana. The choice of a warlike theme for this and a number of his later compositions such as the two *ChandiCharitras*, mostly in Braj, was made to infuse martial spirit among his followers to prepare them to stand up against injustice and tyranny.

Much of Guru Gobind Singh's creative literary work was done at Paonta he had founded on the banks of the River Yamuna and to which site he had temporarily shifted in April 1685. His *Jap* and the composition known as *Akal Ustati* are in this tenor. He preached the worship of the One Supreme Being, deprecating idolatry and superstitious beliefs and observances. The glorification of the sword itself which he eulogized as *Bhagwati* was to secure fulfilment of God's justice.

At Paonta, his increasing influence among the people and the martial exercises of his men worried the neighbouring Rajput hill rulers who led by Raja Fateh Chand of Garhwalplanned to attack him. But they were defeated at Bhangam, about 10 km northeast of Paonta, on 18 September 1688. Soon thereafter Guru Gobind Singh left Paonta and returned to Anandpur which he fortified in view of the continuing hostility of the Rajput chiefs. The repeated attacks of the Hill Rajas during 1700-04 however proved abortive, as the Sikhs resisted. They at last petitioned Emperor Aurangzeb for help.

The Hindu hill rulers(Jammu, Nurpur, Mandi, Kullu, Kainthal, Guler, Chamba and Srinagar) were already an established force in the hills. They were hereditary rulers, and had been living in those areas since many a century. They had accepted the suzerainty of the Mughal emperors over them, the political equilibrium had been established, and was working to the benefit of both, the hill kings as well as the Mughals. It was a relationship of symbiosis as the hill kings, with their catchment area as well as resources confined to the hills. So, when the 10th guru started exerting politically and militarily, the hill kings, under the leadership of Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur, sought the help of the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb who agreed to send his troops if all expenses were paid for, which was agreed to. Pains Khan and Din Beg were sent to help the Rajas. Pains Khan was killed and Din Beg retreated wounded.

Aurangzeb, the emperor was sitting in the Deccan, with a large part of the Mughal army, and was not expected to return to Punjab or Delhi to lead the armies. The local commanders

were the decision makers. They gathered whatever forces they could and surrounded the bastion of the Sikhs. So, both of his rivals, the hill kings as well as the Mughals came together to uproot him from the hills. Following this there were several attempts by the Hill kings to attack Anandpur, but they lost all the battles.

Raja Ajmer Chand then met Aurangzeb personally to petition for more help, describing “anti-state” activities of Guru Gobind Singh and that “he had founded a new religion and wanted all Hindus to embrace it and wage war on the Mughal Empire”. Aurangzeb dispatched more troops under the subedar of Sirhind, Wazir Khan. The combined troops marched upon Anandpur and laid a siege to the fort in May 1705. Over the months, the Guru and his Sikhs firmly withstood their successive assaults despite dire scarcity of food resulting from the prolonged blockade. At this stage the besiegers offered, on solemn oaths of Qur’an, safe exit to the Sikhs if they quit Anandpur. At last, the town was evacuated during the night of 5-6 December 1705. But soon, as the Guru and his Sikhs came out, the hill monarchs and their Mughal allies set upon them in full fury. The Guru himself was able to make his way to Chamkaur, 40 km southwest of Anandpur, with barely 40 Sikhs and his two elder sons. There the imperial army, following closely on his heels, caught up with him. His two sons, Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh and all but five of the Sikhs fell in the battle that took place on 7 December 1705. The five surviving Sikhs under *Gurmatta* (Guru’s intentions), bade the Guru to save himself in order to reconsolidate the *Khalsa*. Guru Gobind Singh with three of his Sikhs escaped into the wilderness of the Malva, two of his Muslim devotees, Gani Khan and Nabi Khan, helped him at great personal risk.

One of the many Sikh war cries is the famous ‘*Sava Lakh Se EkLadaunTabhiGobind Singh NaamKahaun*’. The saying came from this battle of Chamkaur Sahib. If the legend is to be believed, Guru Gobind Singh went against 10 lakh Mughal and Hindu Hill Raja soldiers while having only 40 warriors on his side. The battle went down in history as one of the greatest ever.

Two of his sons, Ajit Singh (18 years old) and Jujhar Singh (13 years old), died in the battlefield at Chamkaur, while two of his young sons, Zorawar Singh (9 years old) and Fateh Singh (6 years old), were bricked alive after being arrested. Guru Gobind Singh makes a reference to this battle in his victory letter *Zafarnama*.

Guru Gobind Singh believed in *Dharam Yudh* (war in defense of righteousness), something that is fought as a last resort, neither out of a wish for revenge nor for greed nor for any destructive goals. The sword was never meant as a symbol of aggression. It was the emblem of self-respect and was to be used only in self-defense, as a last resort. Guru Gobind Singh said in a Persian couplet in his ‘*Zafarnamah*’:

"Chun karazhamehheelatedarguzasht, Halalastburdan bi-shamsherdast."

When all has been tried, yet justice is not in sight,
It is then right to pick up the sword, it is then right to fight"

To Guru Gobind Singh, one must be prepared to die to stop tyranny, end persecution and to defend one's own religious values. He led fourteen wars with these objectives, but never took captives nor damaged anyone's place of worship. His wars were never fought for annexing territory, only for saving land that legally belonged to him. Also a lesser known fact is that although his wars were fought against the Mughals, most of these were fought on the behest of the Hindu kings of the Hill areas.

Since Guru Gobind Singh's fight wasn't against Islam, many Muslims helped him in his struggle against state violence, while many Hindus sided with the Mughal Empire—with one (their long time servant and escort, Gangu, (a Kashmiri Pandit) deceiving his younger sons

and his mother, Mata Gujri, to have them arrested. Mata Gujri died in prison after hearing about the execution of her younger grandsons. Raj Kaul, Gangu's son was allotted a *Jagir* by Mughal Ruler Farrukhsiar near a canal west of Delhi about the year 1716.

Guru Gobind Singh raised his army from among the oppressed caste groups (*Mazhabi* Sikhs) who were never allowed to keep weapons or even worship by Hindu priests and rulers. *Mazhabi* Sikhs are members of the *Rangretta* clan who embraced the Sikh faith and are mainly found in the Punjab region (Pakistani Punjab, Its frontier province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and into Indian Punjab), Kashmir, Himachal. Haryana and Rajasthan. The word "*Mazhabi*" is derived from the Urdu term "*Mazhab*" ("sect"), and can be translated as "the religious" or "the faithful".

Accorded a low caste status in the Hindu faith; the *Rangrettas* were employed as scavengers, poor farmers, and labourers. The Sikh faith had a special appeal for the *mazhabis* and they rapidly embraced it as it did not differentiate on the basis of caste or creed and held everybody equal. This emboldened the downtrodden to fight against injustice, tyranny and persecution.

When Guru Tegh Bahadur was killed by the Mughals in Delhi, Bhai Jaita (Baba Jeevan Singh) brought his head back to Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Gobind Singh declared that the *Rangrettas* (*Mazhabis*) were his sons, and admitted them to the Sikh faith. Originally, the term *Mazhabi* referred only to the descendants of these people.

The *Mazhabi* Sikhs formed separate companies from the regular Jat battalions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The *Mazhabi* Sikhs lost their military deployment after the defeat of the Sikhs in the Anglo-Sikh wars. They later found deployment in Maharaja Gulab Singh's (of J&K) army as pioneers. The British turned to them for fighting the Indian Rebellion against the Bengal Sepoys. The first Pioneer Sikh Regiment was formed in 1857. The British military classification system, which rated recruits according to their caste, continued to assert that *Mazhabis* were best suited as pioneers while, for example, Jat Sikhs should be infantry.

Guru Gobind Singh fought 13 battles against the rulers of the Sivalik hills, led by the Mughal subedars/ faujdars:

1. Battle of Bhangani 1688
2. Battle of Nadaun 1691
3. Battle of Guler 1696
4. Battle of Anandpur 1700
5. Battle of Anandpur 1701
6. Battle of Nirmohgarh 1702
7. Battle of Basoli 1702
8. First battle of Chamkaur 1702
9. First battle of Anandpur 1704
10. Second battle of Anandpur 1704
11. Battle of Sarsa 1704
12. Battle of Chamkaur 1704
13. Battle of Muktsar / battle of Chamkaur Sahib 1705, this was the last battle fought against the Mughal army. And though the Mughals were blocked again, the Sikh army suffered heavy losses, particularly the *Chalis Mukte* (the forty liberated ones). The place of this battle called Khidrana was renamed about a 100 years later by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to Muktsar (lake of liberation: in honour of those who gave their lives for the cause of liberation)

Guru Gobind Singh saw the war conduct of Aurangzeb and his army against his family and his people as a betrayal of a promise, unethical, unjust and impious. After all of Guru Gobind Singh's children had been killed by the Mughal army and the battle of Muktsar, the Guru

wrote the *Zafarnama* ("epistle of victory"), spiritual victory letter sent by Guru Gobind Singh in 1705 to the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb.

He indicted the Mughal Emperor and his commanders in spiritual terms, accused them of a lack of morality both in governance and in the conduct of war. The letter is spiritually rooted in Guru Gobind Singh's beliefs about justice and dignity without fear.

The letter is written in Persian verse. Guru Gobind Singh sent Bhai Daya Singh to Ahmednagar to give it to Aurangzeb. However, it is said that a copy of the *Zafarnama*, written by himself, was found with the Mahant of Patna Sahib in 1890 and one Babu Jagan Nath made a copy; this copy was somehow misplaced by him. Since Babu Jagan Nath was himself a scholar in Persian language, he could reproduce it from his memory and got it printed in Nagri Parcharni Patrika in Benaras. He is also believed to have sent a copy to Sardar Umrao Singh Shergill in Amritsar who is said to have given it to Khalsa College and which in turn reproduced in Makhz-e-Twarikh Sikhan. In Punjab newspapers, it first appeared in the Khalsa Samachar of 16 July 1942. Then in 1944, Kapur Singh ICS published it in Urdu Ajit of Lahore under the heading "*Fatehnama*". It is quite possible that in the process of translations and publications of the *Zafarnama* at different stages, some verses were not reproduced correctly and what we have today is not the original *Zafarnama* of the Guru in its entirety. The abrupt end of the *Zafarnama* also indicates that it is not complete and that some verses have been left out.

Aurangzeb died in 1707. His official successor was Bahadur Shah I, who invited Guru Gobind Singh with his army to meet him in person in the Deccan region of India, for a reconciliation but Bahadur Shah then delayed any discussions for months.

When Bahadur Shah I became the Emperor after Aurangzeb, his actual name was Qutbud-Din Muhammad Muazzam and he was the Governor of Kabul. Once the war of succession became imminent, Muazzam sent a request to Guru Gobind Singh, who was then camping at Sirsa, for military help.

Guru Gobind Singh agreed to give military support on two conditions: Firstly, when Muazzam becomes the Emperor he would treat all his non-Muslim subjects as equals and Secondly he would hand over to the Guru all those who committed atrocities upon his Sikhs.

After Muazzam agreed to the two conditions, Sikh troops were sent. The crucial battle was fought at a place called Jajuwan -north of Agra- on 19 June 1707 and Muazzam was victorious. To permanently remove any challengers to the throne, Muazzam executed his younger step-brother Azam Shah and his two sons.

After Muazzam became the Emperor, Guru Gobind Singh went from Sirsa to Agra on invitation from the Emperor, stopping on the way at Moti Bagh in Delhi where a Gurdwara stands on the Ring Road now. He was received very courteously and presented with a *Khilat* -a trail of expensive gifts. The *Khilat* also included a *Saif* (equivalent of the European Broad Sword), which once belonged to Hazrat Ali, the son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad. The Saif was sent to Aurangzeb by the Caliph of Baghdad in appreciation of his efforts to spread Islam in India. It's now preserved among the weapons of Guru Gobind Singh at Keshgarh Sahib Gurdwara in Punjab, India. The *Saif* has five inscriptions in Persian/ Arabic on it:

1. *Nasr min Allah wafatahqareeb* 2. *La illahhaillallah Muhammad ur Rasullallah* 3. *Mohiteellim Rakund Mohar Amirul Mominin Heder Ama-al-jinn Wal-ins so wasral Mustafa haque.* 4. *Bismillah hir rahmanir rahim* 5. *La fatahilla Ali La saifilla Zulfiqar.*

After presentation of the *Khilat*, Guru Gobind Singh reminded the Emperor of the two conditions he had agreed upon but Bahadur Shah remained noncommittal. The Emperor requested Guru Sahib to accompany him towards the Deccan, where the Mughals were

fighting the Marathas in the present day hinterland of Mumbai. During their ride together, as the Emperors' *rafafqat* (companion, as mentioned by historian Khafi Khan), Guru Gobind Singh reminded him about his promises on several occasions but Bahadur Shah evaded the subject. The exact reason why Guru Gobind Singh accompanied Bahadur Shah to the Deccan has been debated by many.

The two reached Nanded where Guru Sahib tried for the last time to persuade the Emperor. When he found him backtracking on his word, it is said that Guru Gobind Singh told the Emperor that he would rule for a very short period.

Bahadur Shah I ruled from 1707 to 1712 –for 5 years only- and was killed in Lahore by his own sons at the age of 70. The rulers after Bahadur Shah I—in particular Farrukhsiar- laid a prize on the head of a Sikh: Anyone bringing the chopped head of a Sikh got 10 rupees. All such historic orders were recorded in the Court Diary of the Mughals called '*Darbarey Akhbaar Maula*'.

Wazir Khan, against whose army the Guru had fought several wars, commissioned two Afghans, Jamshed Khan and Wasil Beg, to follow the Guru's army as it moved for the meeting with Bahadur Shah I, and then assassinate the Guru. The two secretly pursued the Guru whose troops were in the Deccan area of India, and entered the camp when the Sikhs had been stationed near river Godavari for months. They gained access to the Guru and Jamshed Khan stabbed him with a fatal wound at Nanded.

The Guru died of his wounds a few days later on 7 October 1708. His death fueled a long and bitter war of the Sikhs with the Mughals and later with the Afghans. The struggle was continued by Banda Singh Bahadur. Banda Bahadur shook the foundation of Mughal Empire in North India during the next seven years -1709 to 1715- and paved the way for complete liberation of Punjab from 1764 onwards. His pioneering struggle helped establish the Sikh Empire which put a stop to the six monthly raids from Afghanistan.

The fighter to continue the struggle against the Mughals was found by Guru Gobind Singh in Nanded itself a short distance away from the spot where he had his last meeting with Bahadur Shah I. The name of the fighter was Madho Dass, a Bairagi Sadhu. He became a Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh and was named Gurbaksh Singh, meaning 'blessed by the Guru' and later got to be known as Banda (Singh) Bahadur.

Banda Singh Bahadur (born Lachman Dev, in Rajauri, Poonch District, Kashmir; 27 October 1670 – 9 June 1716, Delhi), was a Sikh military commander who established a Sikh state with capital at Lohgarh (Haryana). At age 15 he left home to become an ascetic, and was given the name "Madho Das". He established a monastery at Nanded, on the bank of the river Godavari, where in September 1708 he was visited by, and became a disciple of, Guru Gobind Singh, who gave him the new name of Banda Singh Bahadur after initiating him into the *Khalsa*. Armed with the blessing and authority of Guru Gobind Singh, he came to Khanda in Sonipat and assembled a fighting force and led the struggle against the Mughals and Afghans. Guru Gobind Singh also appointed five Sikhs (Baj Singh, Binod Singh, Ram Singh, Daya Singh, Kahan Singh) to assist him.

According to some historians, the Persian texts that were composed by Mughal court historians during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh were hostile to him, but presented the Mughal perspective. They believed that the religious Guru tradition of Sikhs had been corrupted by him, through the creation of a military order willing to resist the Imperial army. They write that some Persian writers who wrote decades or a century after the death of Guru Gobind Singh evolved from relying entirely on court histories of the Mughals which disparage the Guru, to including stories from the Sikh *gurbilas* text that praise the Guru.

The creation of the *Khalsa* is regarded as Guru Gobind Singh's greatest achievement. In recognizing the collective body of disciples as Guru, Guru Gobind Singh abolished personal Guruship, merged himself in the *Khalsa* and invested the whole sect with the dignity of 'Gurudom'. This was done by Guru Gobind Singh in a special assembly in the Keshgarh Fort at Anandpur on the day of Baisakhi, 1699. It was here that he baptized the first 5 sikhs as the 'punjpyaare'. These were Daya Ram (shopkeeper from Lahore), Dharam Singh (farmer from Hastinapur, now Meerut), Mohkam Chand (tailor from Dwarka), Himmat Rai (water bearer from Puri) and Sahib Chand (barber from Bidar).

Guru Gobind Singh then introduced *khande da pahul*, i.e. initiation by sweetened water (*amrit*) churned with a double-edged broad sword (*khanda*). This replaced the '*charanpahul*' followed by the '*masands*', the local heads. The idea was to not only end caste barriers once and for all, but also to empower those considered weak and untouchable.

The five Sikhs formed the nucleus of the martial and casteless fellowship of the *Khalsa* Guru Gobind Singh had brought into being. They were given the surname of 'Singh' (Gobind Rai himself came to be known as Guru Gobind Singh), with the formation of the *Khalsa* in 1699. as a uniform social status and were to wear the five emblems of the *Khalsa* — *kesh* or unshorn hair and beard; *kangha*, a comb in the *kesh* to keep it tidy as against the recluses who kept it matted in token of their having renounced the world; *kara*, an iron bracelet; *kaccha*, short breeches worn by soldiers; and *kirpan*, a sword. They were instructed to aid the helpless and fight the oppressor, to have faith in One God and to consider all human beings equal, irrespective of caste and creed. The essence of the new system was that no individual would henceforth be recognized as Guru; the *Khalsa*, inspired and guided by the 'Word' (*Gurbani* of the *Granth*), would be the physical and spiritual controller of the *panth*.

Guru Gobind Singh said to those gathered: "*from now on, you have become casteless. No ritual, either Hindu or Muslim, will you perform, and believe in superstition of no kind, but only in the one God who is the Master and the Protector of all, the only Creator and Destroyer. In your new order, the lowest will rank equal with the highest and each will be to the other bhai. No pilgrimages for you any more, nor austerities, but the pure life of the household, which you will sacrifice at the call of Dharma (righteousness). Women shall be the equal of men in every way. No purdash for them anymore, nor the burning alive of the widow on the pyre of her spouse. He who kills his daughter, the Khalsa shall not deal with him. Five K's you will observe*"

Guru Gobind Singh ordered Sikhs to follow the *Guru Granth Sahib* as their guiding light in the future and never follow any living guru. The idea of '*Guru Khalsa*', meaning *Khalsa* incorporating the Guru took shape.

The adoption of the Kshatriya status (as a fighting caste) was a social promotion for most of the Sikhs, particularly Jats. The Brahmins and Kshatriyas, were naturally reluctant to enter the new fold and share their traditional importance with the lower castes. Jats (who were fearless due to their habits and temperaments), along with Guru Nanak's teachings of 'God is without fear and he who is imbued with the fear of God becomes fearless', made this force fearless. In the 18th century, the *Khalsa* considered itself to be a body of warriors of God (*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa*). Ranjit Singh used the word *Khalsa* to refer to his army.

Sikhs, as a community, have stood tall as a breed of warriors...from the gallant Gurus to the Indian Army. M.A. Macauliffe (senior Sikh-British officer who stayed back in India to translate the *Guru Granth Sahib*) says: "The tenth Guru invented new names for God – *Akal* (the immortal), *Sarbloh* (All steel), *Mahan-loh* (great steel), *Sarbkal* (All death), *Mahan-kal* (great death), *Asidhuj*, *Asiketu*, *Kharagketu* (having the sword on his banner), and *Asipani* (sword in His hand)." This innovation according to him, was intended to present God as the impersonation and source of bravery.

The transformation of the Sikhs from the 'peaceful *panth*' of Guru Nanak under the *Bhakti* movement to a 'military' outfit had started during the time of Guru Arjan, though they did not have the resources to build up a 'State' in opposition to the Mughal empire. Probably foreseeing difficult times, Guru Arjan introduced military training. He introduced the twin concept of *miri* (temporal power) and *piri* (*faqiri*/ spiritual power). However, use of military power was only sanctioned against rulers guilty of injustice and oppression. The militarization also helped to unite the various factions of *Bedis*, *Sodhis* and *masands* during Guru Hargobind's time.

During Akbar's secular rule and his policy of *sulh-i-kul*; ("universal peace"/ "peace with all"), the Sikh *panth* profited by his patronage and constructed the holy city of Amritsar, which started at the time of Guru Amar Das and continued by Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev. Towards the end of Akbar's reign, a Muslim revivalist movement (*mujaddid*) was started by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi of *Naqsbandi* Sufi order. Very strongly opposed to Akbar's liberal religious policy, he sought to make Islamic orthodoxy, through *Shari'a* laws the imperial policy. According to him *shari'a* and Sufism were not mutually exclusive terms. Ahmad Sirhindi wrote a letter to Mughal emperor Jehangir emphasizing that he is now correcting the wrong path taken by his father, Emperor Akbar. Jehangir was established as 'King of Islam'.

It was during this time that Guru Arjan Dev was persecuted. This is when the first steps towards militarization appeared to be a radical departure from the Sikh ideology as it had developed in the 16th century, perhaps due to the 'external threat'.

Aurangzeb was dedicated fully to the Sunni orthodoxy, and began to impose his own faith on non-believers through persuasion, temptation and coercion. He targeted the Kashmiri Brahmins, believing that if he managed to convert them, he would be able to do so more easily in other parts of the country. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom for this cause has few precedents in history. However, Aurangzeb did not persecute Guru Gobind Singh the way Jehangir had persecuted Guru Arjan Dev. This is also probably due to the fact that he had left for Deccan in 1679, fighting his wars with the Rajputs and Marathas, and remained there till his death.

Guru Gobind Singh, in his own statement in the *Bachittar Natak* (*his autobiography of first 32 years of his life*), regarded the 'house of Babar' as the supporter of 'the house of Nanak', as both are creations of God, one as temporal and one as spiritual. He clearly accepted the temporal authority of the Mughal Empire and never challenged it. No question of resistance to the Mughal rule could arise as long as it did not violate the principles of justice and morality. He wrote:

Babe ke Babur ke Do-ou
Apkare Parmeshwar So-ou
Dinshah in koanmano
Dunishunkopahchano
Jo Babe ke dam na de-hai
Tis tegeh Babur ke le-hai.

The *Zafarnama*, reflects an entirely different historical context. It was written in 1705 after the death in battle of his sons at the hands of Wazir Khan. However, this too wasn't a declaration of war against Aurangzeb. It reveals the Guru's earnest desire to meet him, apparently for a reconciliation. Never, at any point in his life did he consider overthrowing the Mughal sovereignty.

Guru Gobind Singh's militant ideology is softened by saintly humility: 'the sword is useless without God's grace'. Guru Gobind Singh stressed the need of resistance to oppressive exercise of political power, but he did not specifically repudiate the authority of the Mughal

Empire, and he did not formulate the idea of the Sikh State. However, he prepared the ground for the political developments of the 18th century. 'He had set the Sikh's souls free and filled their hearts with a lofty longing for freedom and ascendancy. He had broken the charms of sanctity attached to the lord of Delhi and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by Mughal tyranny. He was the spiritual father of the State established by the *Khalsa* and raised to political pre-eminence by Ranjit Singh. However, this righteous *Khalsa* army defied these very principles after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh'. The Sikhs, divided, resorted to plunder and destruction till Jassa Singh Ahluwalia reorganized the force.

The Sikh faith today is known worldwide, not only for the fearless warriors, but also for its selfless service (*sewa*) and *langar* (free community kitchen). The history of *langar*, as an institution is an interesting one. It was first started by *Baba Farid*, a Punjabi Muslim of the Chishti Sufi order. The institution of the *langar* was already popular in the 12th and 13th century among Sufis of the Indian subcontinent. The practice grew and is documented in the *Jawahir al-Faridi* compiled in 1623 AD by Ali Asgar Chisti. It was later, both as an institution and the term, adopted by Sikhs. The *langar* concept as a charity and symbol of equality was adopted by the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak around 1500 AD. According to Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, a professor of Sikh Studies, community kitchens were already operating in Punjab when Guru Nanak founded Sikhism, and these were run by Muslim Sufi orders and by Hindu Yogi, Gorakhnath orders.

The Sikh faith teaches that service to the community is important. Sikhism teaches that people should try to become less self-centred (*manmukh*) and more God-centred (*gurmukh*) and should live their lives in the selfless service of others (*sewa or karseva*). There are three different parts of *sewa*:

- Tan: physical service, eg, working in the *langar* and helping to look after the gurdwara.
- Man: spiritual/ mental service, eg, studying the Guru Granth Sahib and teaching it to others.
- Dhan: material service to other people, eg, giving money to charities or giving time to help people who are in need.

The Sikhs need to revisit *Sikhi* of following the basic teachings of *kiratkaro* (honest and hard work), *vandchakho* (community sharing), and *naamjapo*. Duties, becoming rituals abound with regards to the Granth Sahib, which has been 'idolized' but not understood and followed. One of the most important teachings of Guru Gobind Singh was to be a '*Khalas*' man/ woman in all aspects of life. However, what we see today is an overlap of social, economic and political forces of our society with religion, but religion as an 'objectified value system/ commodity'. Religion has become a dividing force instead of being a binding or a uniting belief system(s). It is not just internal disputes but several external forces too which contribute to these divisions.

The Hindutva forces have been trying to appropriate Guru Gobind Singh for their own ends. They frequently portray him as a defender of the Hindu religion and an opponent of Muslims, which is a complete distortion of the historical facts. The RSS, through one of its *shakhas*, the *Rashtriya Sikh Sangat*, formed in 1986 by Shamsher Singh, continues to misguide people about Guru Gobind Singh. It is now headed by B.L. Sharma, a member of BJP/VHP.

The RSS chief, K. Sudarshan, while participating in the *Rashtriya Sikh Sangat* Convention in Amritsar (April 2000) said that Sikhism is a sect of Hinduism while the *Khalsa* is a part of mainstream Hinduism which was created to protect Hinduism from Mughal tyranny. It has laid out a 25 point agenda for assimilation of Sikhism into Hinduism. One of the texts published in their magazine, the '*Sangat Sandesh*' of Sept 1998 says: "Guru Gobind Singh with the blessings of the Avatars (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) created the *Khalsa Panth*."

Dr. Sukhpreet Singh Udhoke points out the use of the phrase “*Rashtra Purush*” for Gobind Singh at the celebration of his 350th birth anniversary in Patna. How is one to define this ‘*rashtra*’ he asks, which has shrunk from Guru Gobind Singh’s time? When his teachings were for the whole of mankind, how can he be limited to a nation? Similarly there is a distorted version of Senapat’s (who wrote three years after Guru Gobind Singh’s death) words being circulated about Guru Tegh Bahadur after his martyrdom. Senapat wrote: ‘*sagalshristi pedaapi chadar*’ which has been cleverly reworded as ‘*Hind kichadar*’. As Dr. Udhoke explains, Guru Tegh Bahadur would have sacrificed his life for Muslims had there been an oppressive Hindu ruler or even for Buddhists and Jains. He sacrificed his life for the oppressed and not for a religion or a nation.

Many facts get distorted, for example, while Aurangzeb died in 1707 and Guru Gobind Singh met Banda Bahadur in 1708, many texts and images related to Banda Bahadur show him fight Aurangzeb’s forces.

The spokesperson of *Dal Khalsa* said that, the RSS was trying to impose a centralized monolithic society in India and that they would oppose this hegemonic agenda. Meanwhile, many other Sikh organizations pointed out that the RSS was interfering in the religious, cultural, social and political matters of Sikhs.

The BJP, political wing of RSS has a political alliance with *Shiromani Akali Dal*(SAD) of which Badal family is the custodian. RSS is accused of making inroads into Sikh religion under the garb of its political alliance with SAD and Badal family was blamed for creating room for RSS for their vested interests.

Karnail Singh Peer Mohammed President of All India Sikh student’s federation said (October 2017) that “RSS ... are working on hidden agenda. He alleged that though the blame of massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 is entirely labeled on Congress but RSS activists were also involved in violence against Sikhs and their role is never probed.”

More recently, PM Modi’s statements were strongly criticized by several Sikhs in India and the diaspora, including the Sikh Council UK, on his statement that Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jee, the founder of the Khalsa, authored ‘Gobind Ramayana’. The statement was delivered in a speech by PM Modi during the ‘Bhoomi Poojan’ event at the ... ‘Ram Janmabhoomi’ at Ayodhya.

“Sikhs in the diaspora community are concerned that such comments are motivated by the intention to assimilate India’s minority communities, such as Sikhs, into the fold of the Hindu religion. This concern is escalated when the Prime Minister shares the stage with the chief of the RSS. This organisation includes ‘Hindutva’ (the idea of Hindu hegemony) as its public objectives.

Gurbani (Sikh scripture) makes references to Rama, Krishna and many other deities, including prophets of Abrahamic faiths. However, Modi’s assertion that Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jee authored a ‘Ramayana’ like Tulsi or others that eulogised Raama as God is false.”

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